

Middle East Newsfile: Arab News  
Copyright (C) 1999 Moneyclips Middle East Newsfile; Source: World  
Reporter (TM)

Monday, December 27, 1999

Telethon raises SR47m for Chechnya; King Fahd donates SR18.775  
million

Abdul Wahab Bashir, Arab News Staff

The telethon was organized by the joint Saudi relief committee for Kosovo and Chechnya. A large portion of the money--SR18.775 million--came from Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Fahd, according to the Saudi Press Agency.

Other officials, including Prince Naif, the minister of interior, who ordered the launching of the campaign, and Prince Salman, Riyadh governor, also contributed to the telethon with Prince Naif giving SR2 million and Prince Salman SR1 million.

Women sent their jewelry to the station while children donated their pocket money. The broadcasters were flooded with telephone calls and fax messages from countries as far as Djibouti and the United Kingdom while others called in from the United Arab Emirates and Syria.

Bracelets and necklaces valuing SR10,000 each were shown on the screen. Many donors, including one who gave SR10 million, refused to reveal their identities, saying they were giving the money as philanthropists.

A Saudi woman who said she had no money to pay donated her medicines. She told the station she wanted the packet of medicine to be used by some of the sick Chechen refugees who have no access to insulin.

Prince Talal, chairman of the Arab Gulf Fund for the Support of United Nations Organizations (AGFUND), announced a donation of SR375,000 (\$100,000) in the name of the fund.

Sheikh Saad Al-Beraik, a Saudi religious scholar who joined the telethon team, called on Muslims with bank accounts in European and American banks to contribute part of the money to assist their brethren in Chechnya and other areas. "You better bring out this money and spend it in the cause of Allah before you die and leave it behind."

Saudi Arabia has condemned as savage the Russian bombings in Chechnya and said it was distressed by the continuing Russian offensive in the breakaway republic. A government statement said the Kingdom "once again announces its distress in the face of events resulting from the Russian

military operations and the unjustified savage bombings against Chechen towns and villages" and called on Russia to respond favorably to international appeals to end its unjustified acts against Chechnya.

The Makkah-based Muslim World League also described as an unprecedented act of barbarity the Russian operation in Chechnya and called on the world community to intervene to prevent the massacre of Chechens.

"The MWL which represents Muslim peoples and minorities all over the world calls on international bodies and peace-loving forces to move to stop the Russian aggression and prevent the destruction of the Chechen capital and the massacre of its innocent residents," the league said.

Meanwhile, a private Saudi firm had threatened to withdraw its business from Russia in protest against the war in Chechnya. The Al-Suiket group, belonging to businessman Mubarak Abdullah Al-Suiket, "could cease activities in Russia, which will only resume after the complete halt to the war in Chechnya," according to Al-Sharq Al-Awsat daily.

The group runs 45 industrial ventures, including the construction of a dry dock, reservoirs, railways and housing in Russia.